



Talking Points Winter 2008 - 2009

Think Safety First When Heating Your Home This Winter!

- ❖ Heating is the second leading cause of home fires in Massachusetts, causing over 14,000 residential fires over the past five years.
- ❖ Wisely use your home heating system and alternative heating appliances, such as space heaters and wood stoves.

Know the ABCs of Fire Safety

- ❖ Make sure there are working smoke alarms outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home.
- ❖ Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms monthly and change the batteries twice a year, when you change the clocks.
- ❖ Hold home fire drills to practice your home escape plan.
- ❖ Practice home fire safety and set a good example for children.

Maintain Your Home Heating Equipment

- ❖ Have your heating system inspected and cleaned every year.
- ❖ Have a professional install new equipment in accordance with the building code and manufacturer's instructions as this requires a permit.
- ❖ Make sure that any new heating equipment is approved by a national testing agency such as Underwriter's Laboratory (UL).
- ❖ Make sure all fuel burning equipment is vented to the outside and that the exhaust vent is kept clear and unobstructed. This includes removal of snow around the outlet to the outside.
- ❖ For natural gas heading equipment -
 - Do not use or store gasoline or painting supplies inside where they can be ignited by the pilot light.
 - Gas leaks can be dangerous. If you smell something like rotten eggs or you think there might be a leak,
 - Move outdoors
 - Do not smoke or turn on or off electrical switches as sparks can cause an explosion
 - Dial 911 immediately
- ❖ For oil heating equipment -
 - Don't let the storage tank get below one-quarter full
 - If the oil burner releases smoke or soot in the house, immediately call for service.

Be Careful When Using Fireplaces and Solid Fuel Stoves

- If you heat your home by burning solid fuels (coal, firewood, pellets), be careful before, during and after using these fuels.

- Burn only dry, well-seasoned wood.
- Have the chimney professionally inspected and cleaned every year.
- Use artificial logs according to manufacturer's recommendations.
- Make sure the stove is approved by a national testing agency such as Underwriter's Laboratory (UL).
- You must get a building permit before installing a stove.
- Keep anything that can burn three (3) feet away.
- Use only kindling wood and newspaper to start a fire. Never use flammable liquids, such as lighter fluid, kerosene or gasoline to start a fire.
- Make sure that your fireplace has a sturdy screen to prevent sparks from flying into the room.
- Allow fireplace and woodstove ashes to cool before disposing in a **metal** container, with a lid. Make sure the container is located away from the house, garage and porch.

Space Heaters Need Space

- Fires caused by space heaters are rare but often deadly. ***One out of every 10 space heater fires in Massachusetts results in a death.***
- Portable kerosene heaters are illegal in Massachusetts to use in your home.
- Do not use space heaters as your number one heating source.
- Keep anything that can burn three (3) feet away.
- Always turn off when going to bed or leaving home.
- Plug power cords only into outlets with sufficient capacity.
- Inspect for cracked, frayed or broken plugs or loose connections. Replace before using.
- If you have to use an extension cord, use only a heavy duty cord and don't overload it with other appliances or lights.
- Use a professional for the proper installation of stationary space heater equipment in accordance with the building code and manufacturer's instructions. This work may require a permit.
- When purchasing a new space heater, make sure it is approved by a national testing agency such as Underwriter's Laboratory (UL).

Carbon Monoxide (CO): The Silent Killer

- Heating appliances are the leading source of carbon monoxide in the home.
- Install carbon monoxide alarms on every level of your home, and outside sleeping areas.
- Don't use the gas stove or oven for heat.
- Have heating equipment and chimneys annually inspected and cleaned by a professional.
- Keep appliance and heating system vents and/or exhaust pipes clear of drifting snow and other obstacles such as overgrown bushes.

For further fire safety information, go to: www.mass.gov/keepwarmkeepsafe

For fuel assistance information, call the HEATLINE at 1-800-632-8175 (or for Boston only 617-357-6012) or on-line at www.mass.gov/dhcd.